

UNIFIED ARIZONA VETERANS – February 2nd, 2008

Call to Order: The regular business meeting of the Unified Arizona Veterans was suspended due to a visit from Governor Napolitano. The Governor addressed the following:

- Tomorrow's Superbowl is a Type I security event involving Homeland Security. The Fiesta Bowl was a good opportunity for a "trial run."
- The letter from Chairman Gary Fredricks regarding the budget reductions to ADVS has been answered. The State of Arizona has a \$10.6 billion budget, and the shortfall is \$900 million. We can anticipate a \$1–1.5 million shortfall for next year. The Governor's budget protects veterans' services from any reduction. The legislature is recommending 10% across the board.
- The Governor addressed the need for veterans' outreach in her state-of-the-state address. A new VBC office was recently opened in Cottonwood to serve the Verde Valley. Offices will open in Parker, Page, Chinle, and Safford.
- Homeless issues are a top priority. There are 30,000 homeless people in Arizona at any given time; 4,000 are veterans. The Governor proposed that UAV make an initiative to partner with the State regarding transitional housing. There is currently a Memorandum of Understanding between ADVS and USVets regarding this.
- There are several new initiatives to assist returning troops. "Helmets to Hardhats" is an apprenticeship program through the Department of Commerce and the Unions to allow military time to count toward certification. "Troops to Teachers" is through the US Dept. of Education and the DoD and is administered in Arizona by ADVS. The program provides incentives for returning troops to go into the field of education. There are currently 700 enrolled in the program.
- The Governor recommended a second contact with the 1st and 2nd year legislators to drive your point home.

A question and answer period was held. A question specific to veterans organization's finances involved allowing pulltabs or instant bingo's in the VSO lounges. The Governor advised that the possibility of gaining legislative approval is extremely minimal.

Gary Fredricks declared the meeting open and introduced State Representative Marian McClure. Ms. McClure is attempting to gain enough signatures for a citizen's initiative to stop payday loans. She gave several instances of individuals who are paying extreme amounts of interest on the loans and will never get out from under them. Ms. McClure had petitions available for members to take. Signed petitions, more petitions, or information requests should be sent to

Ms. Marian McClure
1841 N. Forty-Niner Drive
Tucson, AZ 85749

Frank Schmuck, President of the Hall of Fame Society, presented Chairman Fredricks with a plaque depicting all former Chairmen of Unified Arizona Veterans. The plaque will hang in Liberty Hall, where UAV meets. Gary Fredricks thanked Frank and the large number of Hall of Fame alumni in the audience for the donation.

Introductions: Scott Brooks, Administrative Supervisor for the cemetery; Brad Bridwell and Donna Bleyle from USVets; Jeff Frain and Jim Ashley, Sons of the American Legion; Kathy Othon, wife of Past Chairman Lencho Othon.

The roll of officers and members was called; a quorum was established. The minutes of the January meeting were approved by a motion from Mel Brody, seconded and carried. The Treasurer's report was accepted by a motion from Mel Brody, seconded and carried.

Sickness and Distress: Joan Katzenberger, (Fleet Reserve) fell through the garage ceiling while putting away Christmas decorations. She suffered a broken ankle, knee, and hip, and tore the rotator cuff in her shoulder. She is currently in rehab. Bill Krause has been moved to a rehab in Scottsdale, he is awake and responsive and is progressing.

Reports:

Board of Directors

- The membership roster is available, but is still a “work in progress.” Corrections are noted and will be made for the next printing.
- The Veterans Hall of Fame Society has been accepted for membership. More information is needed from the Mesa Veterans, including a letter and registration with ADVS.
- Webb Ellis, Past Chairman has accepted the request to fill in for Bill Krause as Immediate Past Chairman until Bill is able to return.
- The Activities Calendar has been copied and is available at the February meeting.
- The Chairman will appoint a nominating committee for the elections in May.
- The carillon for the Southern Arizona Veterans Cemetery was discussed.
- A date was sought for a legislative day as discussed at the last meeting. The legislative calendar is totally filled through March. Chairman Fredricks will ask the legislative committee to make recommendations as to a course of action.
- Kathy Upchurch has been added as a member of the Legislative Committee.

General Maxon, Director, ADVS

- A copy of the Governor’s response to Chairman Fredricks was distributed. The letter says, in part, *I share the same concerns and although we are facing fiscal challenges in the coming year, I want you to know that it is my firm belief that these challenges can and must be addressed without compromising critical services to Arizona’s veterans. ...my three-pronged budget management includes asking State agencies to tighten their belts to help meet our budget challenges. ...In my plan, spending for veterans’ services is among the critical services exempted from reductions.*
- A copy of the Executive Summary for the Research Council was distributed to members.
- General Maxon re-introduced Brad Bridwell, USVets, with regard to the Governor’s recommendation that UAV investigate initiatives for homeless veterans.
- Legislation is pending to extend the time for completion of the Enduring Freedom memorial to be placed in Wesley Bolin Plaza from August 2007 to December 31, 2010. The legislation has been placed on the fast-track calendar. It is hopeful that the dedication may be somewhere around May 17th.

Legislative Committee

- Carol Hamburger reported that the committee will lend its focus to state legislation. They have formulated a plan to track all bills by committee to determine where they may be stalled.
- The committee will investigate alternatives to a legislative day.

Phoenix VAMC, Susan Colvin, Patient Advocate

- The Carl T. Hayden VAMC is now officially called the Phoenix Veterans Affairs Healthcare System. Reference to Carl T. Hayden will remain out of respect.
- President Bush signed the Defense Authorization Act on Jan. 28th. A portion of the legislation extends VA medical care for returning troops from two to five years with no co-pay or disability requirements.
- Mileage for scheduled appointments, and compensation and pension exams, has been increased for the first time in 30 years.

Wayne Ellis, National Memorial Cemetery; Mel Brody, Cemetery Committee

- The committee’s total obligation for the carillon was \$56,000.
- It is anticipated that it will be dedicated on Memorial Day.
- An event will be held April 2nd for donors.

Unfinished Business

Diane D’Angelo, ADVS, was introduced. Diane is responsible for the Military Family Relief Fund and Homeless Veterans Coordinator. She reported that \$30,000 came in for the fund last week.

Good of the Order

- Bob DiGiralomo, DAV, distributed fliers about the Standdown to be held Feb 15 & 16.
- Linda Fulkerson, Cactus WAVES, announced a Standdown to be held in Yuma March 14-16.
- The Marine Corps Ball will be held Nov. 10 at the Crown Plaza. Tickets are \$35.00.
- Frank Schmuck reminded everyone that *Voices Take Flight* featuring the Coast Guard Academy and the Phoenix Boys Club Choir will be held March 8. The event will include honoring Rev. Jesse McGuire.
- Kevin "Sarge" Howard from Full Metal Jacket has built a car with the names of all Marine casualties from OIF/OEF. He also has two dragsters and is looking for donations/sponsors to continue showing these cars at various venues. For more information, contact Sue Wudy.
- Reminder that American Legion Post 84 will hold their event honoring the flag raising at Iwo Jima Feb. 22 & 23 in Sacaton.
- Donna Adams read excerpts from a VA press release regarding up-to-the-minute cancer research that shows immense progress from Dr. David Vesely at the Tampa VAMC.

The closing prayer was given by Judy Hatch in the absence of Chaplain Bohach. The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 with proper ceremonies to meet again March 1, 2008.

Donna Adams, Secretary